



**Walking
Scotland**

Your national walking and wheeling charity



THE

POWER

OF

WALKING

A Walking and Wheeling Manifesto for 2026

As Scotland looks to the future, we know walking is one of the best ways to address some of the greatest challenges of our time, including health inequalities, physical inactivity, and the climate-nature emergency.

Walking and wheeling¹ are not just modes of transport – they are good for Scotland's economy, health, environment and our communities. This makes them key to building a fairer, healthier and greener Scotland.

Most people in Scotland are walking or wheeling regularly. 85% are doing so either every day or several times a week. But people want to walk more – 69% want to walk more for leisure and 60% for routine purposes – and feeling safer and having better pavements and paths would encourage this.²



1 Both words represent the action of moving at a pedestrian's pace, whether someone is walking or wheeling unaided or using a wheeled mobility aid, including wheelchairs, mobility scooters, walking frames, prams or buggies.

2 [Walking and wheeling report 2023 – Walking Scotland](#)

Walking Scotland and Living Streets Scotland are calling on all parties in the next Holyrood election to take four steps forward and support Scotland to be a walking and wheeling nation:

1

Put walking and wheeling at the heart of government

2

Invest in walking and wheeling

3

Prioritise walking and wheeling in communities

4

Improve safety for walking and wheeling

1

Put walking and wheeling at the heart of government

- **Provide cross-policy leadership**

Promote walking and wheeling across all levels of government to drive progress across health, transport, climate, planning and development agendas. Collaborative leadership and resourcing across all levels of government are critical to successful implementation.

- **Ensure walking and wheeling is central to decision-making**

We need dedicated policies to enable people to be more physically active, reduce car usage and create greener, connected communities in Scotland. Local and national stakeholders should take a systems-based approach to embedding walking into decision-making, planning and data collection.

- **Prioritise walking**

Walking is at the top of the sustainable travel hierarchy and should be prioritised and resourced as such. Walking and wheeling targets should be clear and ambitious, and allocated appropriate funding, as they are the most accessible form of transport.

Outcomes:

- Alignment with the National Performance Framework and National Planning Framework 4 on outcomes for health, environment, communities, fair work and business, recognising the contribution of walking to national wellbeing.
- Contribution to Sustainable Development Goals 3, 11 and 13 through a shift towards healthier, lower-carbon travel and strengthening of public health objectives.
- Fulfilment of the Scottish Government's goal to promote local living, including progress towards the creation of 20-minute neighbourhoods.



The economic benefit of walking and wheeling trips in 2023 was over

£870 MILLION³

³ www.sustrans.org.uk/the-walking-and-cycling-index/scotland-walking-and-cycling-index/

2

Invest in walking and wheeling

- **Commit long-term funding**

A commitment to longer-term funding for walking and wheeling programmes will enhance delivery and offer better value-for-money. Commit at least 10% of the transport budget to strengthening active travel. Use the sustainable travel hierarchy to guide investment.

- **Encourage behaviour change**

More investment for infrastructure and promotion of walking and wheeling initiatives in communities, schools, and workplaces across Scotland will encourage behaviour change.

- **Improve connections to public transport**

Prioritise walking and wheeling to connect with public transport links. Making it easier for people to use public transport is essential to enable people to reduce reliance on cars.

Outcomes:

- Increased delivery of local walking and wheeling initiatives to support behaviour change, inclusion and participation, particularly in areas of deprivation and inequalities.
- Increased delivery of safer, more accessible routes to key destinations, including schools, workplaces, community centres and the high street.
- More equitable access to walking and wheeling routes in nature and green spaces.



3

Prioritise walking and wheeling in communities

• Maintain and improve infrastructure

Make our paths and streets accessible to all, in rural and urban communities across Scotland. Commit to a Path Fund to improve and maintain paths and path networks and sustain investment to support outdoor access, access officers and ranger services.

• Improve connectedness

Prioritise pedestrian access to services and local amenities through town and rural planning. Strengthen implementation of the Active by Design Guidance to integrate walking and connectedness within and across communities. Follow the sustainable travel hierarchy to inform public procurement in planning, construction and maintenance.

• Support inclusion

Everyone, no matter where they live or their life circumstances, should be able to experience the benefits of walking and wheeling. Accessible, well-maintained paths and pavements, and access to high-quality and sustainable public green and recreational spaces for every community in Scotland is vital to encouraging people to walk and wheel.

Outcomes:

- High quality and inclusive, better-connected walking and wheeling routes connected to public transport, local services and nature.
- New developments and regeneration projects are designed around walking and wheeling from the outset.
- Improved local capacities to fund, plan, deliver, manage and maintain infrastructure, with dedicated officers, rangers, and community and third sector partners.



4

Improve safety for walking and wheeling

• Deliver on Scotland's

Road Safety Framework

Support delivery on Scotland's Road Safety Framework. Reduce traffic speeds with a national 20mph default speed limit making it safer for everyone to walk and wheel.

• Promote changes to the Highway Code

Increase awareness of the recent changes to the Highway Code and the hierarchy of road users, which puts pedestrians at the top. This will create streets that are safer and more accessible.

• Ensure full implementation of the Pavement Parking ban

Full implementation of the pavement parking ban by all local authorities will increase safety and accessibility for those who walk and wheel.

Outcomes:

- Reduction in road danger and traffic-related injuries and increased accessibility of streets and pavements for people walking and wheeling, including children, older adults, and disabled people.
- Improved air quality and local environments in residential areas, city and town centres, and near schools.
- Progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 10 by directing investment to underserved communities, ensuring equitable access to walking and wheeling infrastructure.



Making our streets more walkable is good for local economies, with a return on investment of around £6 for every £1 spent⁴.

⁴ [The Pedestrian Pound, 3rd Edition – Living Streets](#)

Why invest in walking?

Economy

Investing in walking and wheeling makes economic sense. Making our streets more walkable is good for local economies, with a return on investment of around £6 for every £1 spent. In Scottish cities alone, the economic benefit of walking and wheeling trips was over £870 million in 2023.⁵

The cost-benefit ratio of walking is exceptional, particularly when combined with the health, social and environmental benefits. A 20mph default speed limit in communities across Wales was estimated to potentially save £100m annually as deaths and injuries are reduced.⁶

Places and spaces designed for people are better for business, supporting more vibrant high streets, stimulating spending and supporting local small businesses. By improving access to walking as part of everyday journeys and wider transport options, we help more people access education, training and employment opportunities as well as essential services.

Health

Walking helps prevent heart disease, diabetes and cancer. It improves our wellbeing and is linked to better sleep, improved cognitive function and an overall better quality of life. In Scotland, more than 3,400 cases of serious long-term health conditions and over 1,000 early deaths can be prevented by people walking and wheeling.⁷ The number of deaths averted by walking to work was worth over 700 million Euros (around £600 million) a year, even before the value of reduced illness was included.⁸

Improving access to safe, walkable environments and quality public realm and nature is also essential to closing the existing gap in health outcomes. Some of Scotland’s most disadvantaged communities often face the greatest barriers to good health – from poor housing and limited access to green space, to higher rates of long-term conditions. Investing in walking, particularly in communities most affected by poverty and poor health, is a practical and low-cost way to improve our mental, physical and social health and reduce the pressure on the NHS. Walking makes us healthier.

Environment

Transport is our biggest carbon emitter. A shift from driving to active travel will help address the climate-nature emergency. Walking and wheeling reduce road congestion, carbon emissions, and improve air quality.

Investing in walking also supports nature by reducing the need for car-centric infrastructure which frees up space for green corridors, biodiversity, and more sustainable land use. Importantly, it ensures that the benefits – from cleaner air to access to nature – are shared more equally, especially in communities most affected by pollution and environmental harm.

Communities

Walking and wheeling encourage us to make everyday journeys on foot, increasing social interactions and connectedness in our communities and connecting people to their everyday needs with less need to travel. Places and spaces that prioritise walking boost wellbeing, reduce health and social inequalities and make our communities more attractive, friendlier and healthier places to be. Around 7 in 10 Scots support the concept of 20-minute neighbourhoods where everyday needs can be met by a short walk or wheel from their home.⁹

Walking is not just about getting from A to B – it can help tackle wider factors that contribute to social inequality. It encourages healthier lifestyles, improves safety, and enhances access to green spaces, all of which support better life outcomes. These improvements help create environments where everyone can thrive physically, emotionally, and socially, helping to close longstanding gaps in wellbeing and opportunity, particularly in underserved communities in Scotland.

5 [Sustrans Walking and Cycling Index \(Scotland\) \(2023\) – Sustrans](#)

6 [New research shows 20mph speed limit could save Wales £100 million in first year | GOV.WALES – Welsh Government](#)

7 [Sustrans Walking and Cycling Index \(Scotland\) \(2023\) – Sustrans](#)

8 [The Pedestrian Pound, 3rd Edition – Living Streets](#)

9 [Walking and Wheeling National Attitudes Survey 2023 – Walking Scotland](#)

About the charities



Walking Scotland

We are Scotland's walking and wheeling charity. Walking and wheeling are the most affordable and practical ways to help solve some of Scotland's biggest challenges from health inequalities to the climate-nature emergency.

walkingscotland.org.uk



Living Streets Scotland

We are Living Streets Scotland, part of the UK charity for everyday walking. We want to create a nation where walking and wheeling is the natural choice for everyday, local journeys.

livingstreets.org.uk





Walking Scotland

Your national walking and wheeling charity



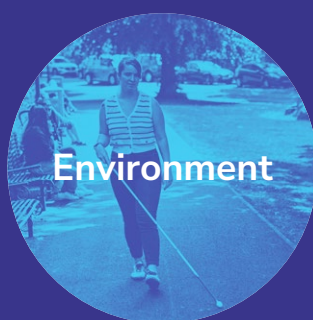
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Economy



Health



Environment



Communities

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Paths for All Partnership (known as Walking Scotland) is a Scottish charity, SC025535, regulated by the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and registered as a company limited by guarantee, 1068554.

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Living Streets (The Pedestrians' Association) is a registered charity. No. 1108448 (England and Wales) and SC039808 (Scotland). Company limited by guarantee (England and Wales), Company registration no. 5368409. Registered office: Stroke Association House, 240 City Road, London EC1V 2PR